IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 5, without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please amend claims 1-4 and 6-12, and add new claims 13-21 as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method of operating a strip casting machine for producing a metal strip, ~~by a continuous~~ the method including the steps of:

continuously pouring of a metal melt between two, casting gap-forming, casting rolls (1, 2); ~~, wherein for~~

providing lateral seals (10) for forming a lateral limitation of a casting gap; ~~, there are provided lateral seals (10) provided with~~

providing sealing plates (11) on the lateral seals (10); and ~~which~~

moving the sealing plates (11) ~~are~~ to be placed or pressed against end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) with a predetermined placement or press-on force; ~~a value of which is adjustable, characterized in that~~

wherein the sealing plates (11) are placed in repeatable ~~go-and-stop~~ intermittent steps, wherein in a go-step, the sealing plates (11) are placed against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) with a predetermined force and time, and are held in the stop position for a predetermined holding time significantly longer than the placement time.

2. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein a magnitude value of the predetermined placement or press-on force of the sealing plates (11) against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) is adjustable ~~, if needed, is periodically varied~~.

3. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the holding time of the sealing plates (11) in the placement position is varied.

4. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the placement force and the placement time is adapted to a sealing behavior of the sealing plates (11) during a casting time.

Claim 5 (canceled).

6. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein in the placement phase, the sealing plates, for a relatively short time, are pressed against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) and are subsequently released from the press-on force and are held in a position before the ~~"stop-and-go"~~ intermittent placement is carried out.

7. (currently amended) A method according to claim [[5]] 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the holding time is [[a]] double [[of]] the placement time.

8. (currently amended) A method according to claim [[5]] 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the holding time exceeds 300 times the maximum placement time ~~maximum in 300 times~~.

9. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein a length of the placement time is ~~adjusted dependent on~~ adjustable based on predetermined factors selected from the group consisting of a diameter of the casting rolls (1, 2), a material composition of the end surfaces of the casting rolls, a value of the pressed-on or placement force of the sealing plates (11), a speed of the sealing plates (11), a steel quality of the material composition of the sealing plates (11), and a material composition of the sealing plates (11) ~~, and/or other factors~~.

10. (currently amended) A method ~~according to claim 1, characterized in that~~ of operating a strip casting machine for producing a metal strip, the method including the steps of:

continuously pouring of a metal melt between two, casting gap-forming, casting rolls (1, 2);

providing lateral seals (10) for forming a lateral limitation of a casting gap;

providing sealing plates (11) on the lateral seals (10); and

moving the sealing plates (11) to be placed or pressed against end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) with a predetermined placement or press-on force;

wherein the sealing plates (11) are placed in repeatable intermittent steps, wherein in a go-step, the sealing plates (11) are placed against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) with a predetermined force and time, and are held in the stop position for a predetermined holding time; and

wherein the length of the placement time amounts to from 1 to 30 sec.

11. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the sealing plates-containing lateral seals (10) are displaced or pivoted in vertical and/or horizontal direction before respective placements.

12. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the placement is effected with an application pressure between 0.5 and 1.0 N/mm^2.

13. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein a magnitude value of the predetermined placement or press-on force of the sealing plates (11) against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) is adjustable.

14. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein the holding time of the sealing plates (11) in the placement position is varied.

15. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein the placement force and the placement time is adapted to a sealing behavior of the sealing plates (11) during a casting time.

16. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein in the placement phase, the sealing plates, for a relatively short time, are pressed against the end surfaces of the casting rolls (1, 2) and are subsequently released from the press-on force and are held in a position before the intermittent placement is carried out.

17. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein the holding time is double the placement time.

18. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein the holding time exceeds 300 times the maximum placement time.

19. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein a length of the placement time is adjustable based on predetermined factors selected from the group consisting of a diameter of the casting rolls (1, 2), a material composition of the end surfaces of the casting rolls, a value of the pressed-on or placement force of the sealing plates (11), a speed of the sealing plates (11), a steel quality of the material composition of the sealing plates (11), and a material composition of the sealing plates (11).

20. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein the sealing plates-containing lateral seals (10) are displaced or pivoted in vertical and/or horizontal direction before respective placements.

21. (new) A method according to claim 10, wherein the placement is effected with an application pressure between 0.5 and 1.0 N/mm^2.